

# July 7, 1935: Moscow Orders first Communists to Hawaii

(*RELEVANT TO Barack Hussein Obama's Communist/Stalinist Mentor, Frank Marshall Davis*)

By Andrew Walden

**[With] NEW MATERIAL (added July, 2009)**

- John Reinecke (later became an Hawaii CP Exec Cttee member): "[The Plan](#)" (1934 or 35) and [CPUSA writer Samuel Weinman "Hawaii: A story of Imperialist Plunder"](#) (1934)
- November 15, 1947, The Izuka pamphlet: "[The Truth About Communism in Hawaii](#)"
- September 1, 1948, Tom O'Brien, Hilo pro-Stainback writer: "[The Plot to Sovietize Hawaii](#)"
- Senate Judiciary Committee Reports (3 pgs): [Hawaii Communists abandon hope of successful insurrection in Hawaii \(1955 report\)](#) also [1953-4 report on Honolulu Record and Frank Marshall Davis--who would in the 1970s become a mentor to Barack Obama.](#) (Note the discussion on abandoning any plan for insurrection apparently occurred in the late 1940s after WW2. CPers concluded that they *could* stage insurrection--if not for US military presence in Hawaii. Since the military was not going to be leaving any time soon, this decision caused them to turn their talents toward legal union and Democratic Party activity.)

**By Andrew Walden (Orig. published 3-8-09)**

When the USSR collapsed in 1991, long-secret archives of the Communist International were thrown open to western researchers for the first time. Many previously unknown details of communist history have been revealed--including the 1935 Comintern orders directing Communists to begin work in Hawaii. These were uncovered by veteran researcher Herbert Romerstein in Moscow.

The transcription is below, the pdf of the original as recovered is [HERE](#) (p 35-36).

Many of the names of the Comintern's "Anglo-American Secretariat" members meeting about Hawaii on February 17, 1935 are aliases of British, Russian, and other European communists. Some are unidentifiable. But one, "Sherman", was much closer to Hawaii and in a position to begin carrying out the Comintern dictates contained in this document.

Romerstein, author of The Venona Secrets, describes "Sherman" as: "William Schneiderman, who, in the 1930s, was an agent of the Soviet foreign spy agency NKVD, code-named "Nat" (Venona transcripts), with an alias of "Sherman." He was later made head of the Communist

Party of California, where he would come into contact with individuals as significant as J. Robert Oppenheimer, the chief scientist at the Manhattan Project. (Herbert Romerstein and Eric Breindel, [The Venona Secrets](#), Washington, DC: Regnery, 2000, pp. 258-68.)

The Comintern's February, 1935 discussion was followed by a July 7, 1935 "Letter to the CPUSA on Hawaii." That led to quick action on the part of American communists. Bob Krauss, in his book, "Johnny Wilson, First Hawaiian Democrat" (p 170) writes:

On the Honolulu docks, a tough little German-Hawaiian from Kalihi, Maxie Weisbarth, spoke for seamen as business agent for the Sailor's Union of the Pacific. A six-page, free-swinging, semi-weekly newspaper called the *Voice of Labor* began publication on November 4, 1935.

One week before this date, a rawboned young seaman named Jack Hall landed in Honolulu from the Mariposa to begin a career as a union organizer that would make him the most powerful labor leader in Hawaii. He eked out a living on less than \$20 a week working for Weisbarth distributing pamphlets....

Communist infiltration of labor unions apparently did not worry Johnny (Wilson), although Hall's friends said Hall read nothing but Communist literature. Johnny said later, "I knew as far back as 1936 that there were Communists here in Hawaii...."

It was 3 1/2 months from issuance of the Comintern's "Letter to the CPUSA on Hawaii" to the arrival of Jack Hall in Honolulu. Koji Ariyoshi, who would go on to assist Mao Zedong as a spy in China during WW2, describes in his memoir "[From Kona to Yenan](#)" (p27), the beginnings of his recruitment to communism (without acknowledging it as such) in 1936 Honolulu.

Also of interest, the [1951 Congressional testimony of former ILWU Communist Jack Kawano](#), describing the earliest communist arrivals in Hawaii. All arrived in late 1935 and early 1936 shortly after the Comintern orders were given.

Hall would eventually lead the ILWU which was controlled by the Communist Party and which would in turn control the Democratic Party. Ariyoshi would edit the ILWU's communist-line [Honolulu Record](#) from 1948-58. Both Hall and Ariyoshi would be among the 1953 "Honolulu Seven" Smith Act defendants. In 1948 Communist Party member [Frank Marshall Davis would arrive](#) from Chicago and become a Honolulu Record columnist under Ariyoshi. Davis would from 1970-79 become a mentor to the young Barack Obama.

In 1954 the Democrats took control of the Territorial Legislature. Between the 1950 beginning of the Korean War and 1959 Statehood, most Hawaii Communists would leave the Party, but not necessarily leave behind Stalinist organizational methods or socialist economic ideas.

As Hawaii's first elected Democrat State Governor Jack Burns would [point out later](#):

"Every guy in the ILWU was at one time or another a member of the Communist Party of America. This is where they got their organizational information and how to organize, and how to bring groups together and how to create cells and how to make movements that are undetected by the bosses and everything else...I know what they were about. I said this was the only way they are going to organize."

The document is transcribed below. Embedded links have been inserted to provide more information about organizations and individuals named in the document. Sections in [brackets] are not visible on the original and a presumed text has been inserted when possible based on context and spacing.

See [pdf of original](#) document (pp 35-36).

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CONFIDENTIAL.  
No.6.

MEETING OF BUREAU, [ANGLO-AMERICAN SECRETARIAT](#),

February 17, 1935.

Present: [McIlhone](#) (chair), Mehring, [Flake](#), [Naumann](#), Brown, [Sherman](#), Levine, Bergmann, Massie, Gray, Porter, Andrews, Brigadier, Riley, Ahnstrom, Billett, [Mingulin](#).

QUESTIONS DISCUSSED:

1. Hawaiian question.

Reporter: Flake.

Speakers: Sherman, Nehring, Mingulin, Naumann.

DECISIONS:

1. To discuss the question with the American and Japanese comrades. To draw up a document which analysis the situation and the revolutionary tasks in Hawaii.

Responsible: Commissor composed of comrades Flake, Mingulin, Porter, Sherman, representative of Eastern Secretariat.

Responsible for Commission: Com. Sherman.

Signed,  
(Illegible)

July 7, 1935

LETTER TO THE CPUSA ON HAWAII

The growing discontent of the masses of the population in the Hawaiian Islands with the regime of colonial oppression and the exploitation of American imperialism with its policy of militarization of the Hawaiian Islands makes it essential for the CP USA to give every possible assistance to the development of the mass revolutionary movement in Hawaii, so that the foundations will be laid for the formation off a Communist party as the leader of the emancipation movement in Hawaii. Due to the altogether insufficient information at present available, it is not possible at present to completely formulate all of the tasks of the revolutionary movement, which further investigation and discussion of this question should be conducted by the American Party.

The political slogans of the Hawaiian revolutionary movement should be based on the developing of the agrarian, anti-imperialist revolution, the struggle against the yoke of American imperialism,

and the bourgeois landlord system, and for a workers' and farmers' republic. Although the slogans of the national liberation struggle cannot be exactly predetermined and will have to grow out of the creation and development of the national liberation movement itself, it is the first and foremost task of the American party to assist this process and raise the slogan of "Right of Self-determination of the Peoples of Hawaii, up to the Point of Separation", to demand the withdrawal of the US armed forces, and to expose the policy of the militarization of Hawaii as part of the war plans of American imperialism.

The CP USA should discuss with the Hawaiian comrades what are the basic tasks of the agrarian anti-imperialist revolution, especially the solution of the land question, which, according to the material available, presents itself as the task of destroying the semi-feudal remnants, the confiscation of the big plantations which predominate in Hawaii (and are mainly owned by foreign imperialists), and the division of the land among the people.

In addition to the main political slogans of the national liberation struggle, the Hawaiian revolutionary movement should consider raising the following immediate partial demands, the struggle for which should receive the full support of the CP USA:

- 1) Full democratic rights for the people -- against the terror; freedom of speech, press, assembly, and the right to organize and strike; full electoral rights [for] the disenfranchised masses and the American soldiers and sailors.
- 2) Equal rights for all [nationalities and an end to] discrimination against the coloured people (Hawaiian, [Japanese], Filipino, etc.)
- 3) Eight hour day for industrial and agricultural workers
- 4) Abolition of the con.. . . labour.
- 5) Establishment of a . . . .ay for  
.... the coloured . . . .
- 6) [Une]mployment and . . . .
- 7) Cancellation of [the debts of small farmers] and sharecroppers.
- 8) Reduction or can[-cellation of re-]nt for small farmers and share-croppers.

The CP USA should [make a prior]ity of establishing a central newspaper (by [combining] the central organs publish by various groups, or making one [of the existing newspapers into the] central organ),

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